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Resources available to the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries for the biennium 2000-2001

Report of the Secretary-General*

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 15 of its resolution 55/214 of 20 December 2000, noted the current level of regular budget resources available to the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries and requested the Secretary-General to ensure that sufficient resources were made available throughout the remainder of the current biennium, through judicious management of the resources at his disposal, and to report on the matter at its fifty-sixth session.

2. In response to that request, the present report provides information on the regular and extrabudgetary resources made available during 2001 to the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

3. At the beginning of the current biennium, there were resources for 15 Professional and 9 General Service posts in the Office of the Special Coordinator, together with resources for other staff costs, consultants and experts, travel and contractual services. In mid-2000, two additional established Professional posts were assigned to the Office from elsewhere in UNCTAD so as to strengthen the Office of the Special Coordinator. This action is included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/56/6 (Sect. 11A), paras. 11A.44 and A.11A.31). Most of those posts including the additional regular budget posts provided to the Office in December 1999 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/249, were encumbered during the biennium. By the end of the current biennium, the resources available for non-post purposes (consultants and experts and travel) will have been fully utilized.

* The footnote requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/248 was not included in the submission.

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4. In accordance with the recognition by States represented at the ninth session of UNCTAD, held in 1996 in South Africa, of the cross-sectoral nature of the problems experienced by least developed countries, the activities of UNCTAD pertaining to least developed, landlocked and small island developing States are mainstreamed or carried out by each of the substantive programmes of the secretariat. Accordingly, throughout the biennium, considerable regular budget resources in UNCTAD were used for preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Brussels in May 2001, in addition to the work carried out by the staff of the Office of the Special Coordinator. Such staff will continue to be engaged in activities in follow-up to the Conference that are to be carried out by UNCTAD within its mandate.

5. In December 1999, the General Assembly provided additional general temporary assistance and other resources to UNCTAD under section 11A of the programme budget in the amount of $616,400 for the purpose of assisting in the preparations for the Conference. Those resources consisted mainly of 48 work-months of Professional staff and $70,000 in the form of funds for travel of UNCTAD staff to preparatory meetings, including those of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for the Conference, held in New York. Those resources were fully expended or committed as at mid-2001.

6. A number of bilateral and other donors made extrabudgetary contributions to UNCTAD for the purpose of its work in assisting in the preparations of the Conference, including Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, in the aggregate amount of about $3.5 million. Those resources were extremely helpful in facilitating: (a) country-level preparations; (b) the organization of regional and thematic preparatory meetings; and (c) the participation of officials from least developed countries in the intergovernmental preparatory meetings. The European Commission, acting on behalf of the European Union as host for the Conference, also made a substantial financial contribution to the Conference itself, including for the active involvement of non-governmental organizations in the Conference and its preparatory process.

7. During the current biennium, the UNCTAD secretariat also undertook other mandated activities related to least developed, landlocked and small island developing States, including for example, the preparation of the annual report on the least developed countries. The various arrangements described above enabled the Secretary-General to ensure that the UNCTAD secretariat as a whole, and the Office of the Special Coordinator in particular, was able to complete the preparatory process in a satisfactory manner and without prejudice to the other mandated activities of the secretariat.